

Digital Humanities Lab Linked Teaching Team: The Troll Project

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Digital Humanities tools/methods:

- Screenshots of comments of YouTube videos
- <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/dashboard-scalar-2?path=dashboard>
- <https://genius.com/>

Description of assignment:

“The Troll Project”

Students were asked to identify a viral video and to observe the text interactions by users for a minimum three-week period. Students then coded the textual comments by putting them into 5 cultural categories which may have included class, gender, or ethnicity references, ideological, mythological, political, or philosophical references. Any other general or specific cultural subgroup references related to media, gaming, art, music, or digital networks were acceptable, too.

Students then needed to decide if and how to participate in these discussions or whether to remain as a lurker. Students documented, either by scraping the text or taking screenshots. After collecting the data students reflected, synthesized the themes, and wrote a brief 250-500-word analysis on their research findings. To complete the assignment, students were required to submit two documents, the analysis paper and another file that contained the organized illustrations, hyperlinks, screenshots or other data.

Outcomes:

The primary learning outcome for students is to identify, archive, data mine, and categorize a variety of cultural references from a media artifact and the comments that users create as a kind of subtext. Students will use a theory of media to evaluate the way that various comments or the users who post them derive meaning or power.

Part of the methodological outcomes is to distinguish the difference between active and passive interaction modalities; to learn how to engage and not descend, and/or learn how to observe and not engage with Internet Trolls.

Takeaways:

- We are asking students to engage in breaking down components from media and meta-media and explaining the connotative codes of culture. Students act as interpreters of these subcultures. This is an area that artificial intelligence algorithms cannot yet break apart because of the dynamic nuances of human social intelligence.
- Screenshots are valuable documents for building contextual storytelling. Here's the commentary on the commentary. (Funny, disturbing, etc.) Screenshots become a primary source of ephemeral digital culture.
- We see a range of attention to detail and quality of student projects. Some students will research according to guidelines. Taking screenshots, organizing them in folders. Some people don't, which is frustrating.
- We've been looking and asking students to look at how people interact with people. We have not been looking at how these interactions are the 'product,' vis-a-vis Surveillance Capitalism.
- Telling people to go to the comment section feels a bit like telling people to watch an X rated movie, and that feels strange. Are we inoculating them, or are we subjecting students to microaggressions?
- This is an opportunity for students to explore how to artfully tell a story- we tell stories, create opportunities for engagement and discussion, within alternative contexts-- we give permission to break rules or norms, especially in research methods or presentation that established media forms or disciplines may not recognize as a result of the hegemonic social, institutional, mediascapes.
- Bottom line advice for students is this: Don't go looking to analyze data if you don't want to see its content. To put that positively- Look at something that *you are* interested in (not just something somebody else thinks is legit or interesting or has been externally validated) --**this is the germ of original research.**

TROLL — EXTRA CREDIT

ABSTRACT

Find a single viral video or article on the internet that has an active comment section. Track the article for a minimum of three weeks cataloging the data into at least 5 categories. Write a 1-2 page reflection paper on the combined result/outcome of this collected data. Turn in both paper and your organized research.

"The message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs."

Marshall McLuhan, 1964

In the case of social media, it may be necessary to collect large, temporally extensive datasets in order to document the phenomena of use and expression. For this project, we will examine the thoughtful, hilarious, hateful, poignant, brilliant and blunt cultural exchanges inside the comments section of an article in order to gain a greater understanding of digital culture.

OBJECTIVES

PART 1: OBSERVE AND COLLECT

- Feel free to participate or simply watch the discussion develop. Up to you. (Keep your interactions civil- this is a school project.)
- Capture screen shots of the conversations, and place these images into a folder.

Observe and collect data for all 5 types of references:

1. IDEOLOGICAL REFERENCES
2. CULTURAL REFERENCES
3. CLASS REFERENCES
4. MYTHOLOGICAL REFERENCES
5. "OTHER" REFERENCES (ANYTHING ELSE OF SIGNIFICANCE OR INTEREST THAT POPS UP.)

PART 2: SYNTHESIZE THESE THEMES

- Put a link to the site you followed/trolled at the very top of the paper.
- Once you collected a minimum of three weeks worth of data, write a 1-2 page response.

PART 3: UPLOAD PAPER AND COMMENTS

- Name the paper using the following naming conventions: troll_lastname.doc
- Place all of your research data and notes into one document, pdf, or folder, and name it using the following naming convention: research_lastname
- Upload all materials to the Lecture's D2L Troll dropbox

Brost Troll Research Paper

Following YouTube Rewind 2018

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbJOTdZBX1g>)

The video that I chose to pick for the Troll project was this year's YouTube rewind, YouTube Rewind 2018. This is a video that YouTube produces at the end of each year, starting in 2010, featuring popular trends, creators and videos. In past years, these videos have been praised by YouTube viewers but as the years have gone on, they have been getting more hate than praise. This year especially has been receiving a huge amount of backlash for many reasons. Just recently it has become YouTube's (the platform) most disliked video of all time at 12 million dislikes. This is a big change from last year's rewind which only had 2 million dislikes and the year before that coming in with only a half of a million of dislikes.

As I stated in the beginning of this paper, YouTube Rewind, is a video that people look forward to at the end of each year. They have always brought smiles to the viewers' faces seeing their favorite YouTubers and fun trends from that year. The major backlash that this created was for many reasons which I will touch on later, but it all started with the everyday YouTube watchers. The first people who saw this were already unhappy with what they created. YouTube was already coming upon a hard year to create a rewind with the platform's huge growth. No matter which creators get chosen to be put in the video, there will be thousands of other creator's unhappy fan base leaving comments. So, putting these unhappy fans aside there is still an outstanding amount of dislikes.

This video also seemed to go viral right after it was posted. It was uploaded onto YouTube on December 6th, 2018 and as of today it has 132,566,020 views and 12 million dislikes. This breaking the record for the most dislikes on the platform. Once the video was released people were immediately tweeting about it and leaving comments. While researching for this project I don't think I saw one positive comment on the video itself.

The ideological reference that I mentioned in my research was a comment where they were saying that the YouTube Rewinds keep getting further away from its real content creators. As a person who both creates YouTube videos and watches them, I agree with this statement. Now even though this is an opinion which makes it an ideological reference, it is true. There are a lot more celebrities making YouTube videos and YouTube Rewind showed this by starting the video with Will Smith. This comment also touches on the fact that original creators are no longer present in the video. This comment I do not agree with because if they kept them the video would end up being hours long.

The cultural reference that I found in a comment was about the lack of diversity that was in the video. This specific comment is talking about Asian representation, or lack of, in the video. This is also something that YouTube has gotten better at over the years but is still not good at. The only big change that they made was that they noticed K-pop getting popular, so they added a lot of it into the video. Though this is a step into the right direction, people were still upset with them not adding in more cultures just because they are not as popular.

Going onto class reference, I chose a comment talking about how YouTube is losing touch on what YouTube is about, which is the viewers. They are getting so popular and money driven that they are only thinking about popularity and not what people actually want to see. Their high class is only focusing on those around them. This making the viewers upset and making it pretty obvious that they are losing touch with what they started as.

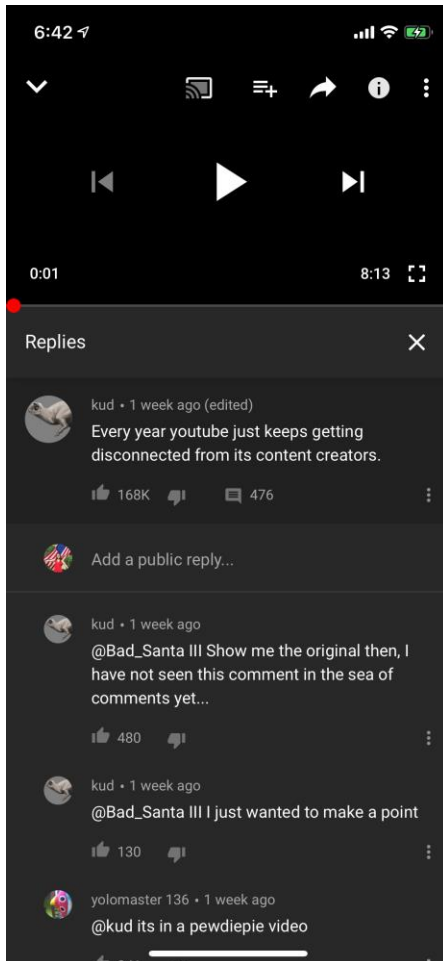
The mythological comment that I found was about the fact how YouTube is only including what looks good and not what was actually popular. In this tweet, the writer says that they aren't posting about things that were popular because they don't fit into the "family friendly" picture that they want to be seen in. This is putting out a false version of YouTube that is not true. Also, there was a part in the video where it seems that some creators are doing a Fortnite dance in what seems to look like the Suicide Forest. This is connecting to the controversial Logan Paul video where he films a dead body while in the suicide forest. If this is true than it does not make sense why they wouldn't include other creators who do nothing this bad. People were also not happy because this video is not a place to bring back up or make fun of in any way.

Lastly, as my other category, I did a second part to the culture reference. I had to touch on the fact that it is the most disliked video on YouTube. This is a huge part on the culture of both the site and the world. Watching YouTube has become so popular in the past year or two that for something like this to happen is huge. This video was a huge mistake for YouTube to make and hopefully they see what they did wrong and how they can fix it. The comments have made it pretty clear that they want YouTube to go back to their roots and become more for the fans again and not for the money.

In conclusion, yes, this video was a very big bust on YouTubes part, but from the comments on both the video and tweets, hopefully they see how they can improve. After doing my research I see that people really just want YouTube to look into what the viewer wants. They need to step away from their wants and go back and look at what started it all, the viewers. We would not have this feedback without a commenting system. Even though the comment section has seemed to become a place only for hate, the negative comments can be turned into constructive criticism on a video like this.

Research Data

1. Ideological References: This comment show the ideological perspective of the person behind the comment. It is showing how they really feel about the video, whether good or bad. It shows that the commenter giving their opinion on what the video is about. Pertaining to the video itself (YouTube Rewind 2018) the commenter says that their opinion is that YouTube is getting further and further away from their creators and putting in more celebrities.



- 2. Cultural References: From this comment about the YouTube Rewind 2018, it shows the lack of certain cultures that is shown in big videos like this. This person was upset with the lack of Asian representation. As YouTube has gone on with past YouTube Rewinds there has been a better representation of different cultures, but this doesn't mean it is the correct representation.

6:52 📶 🔋

< **Tweet**

 **The Skoner™**
@SkonerTM

*YouTube rewind 2018: 'can we also give a moment to Asian representation in entertainment this year'

*Asian representation in entertainment this year:



12/14/18, 6:46 PM

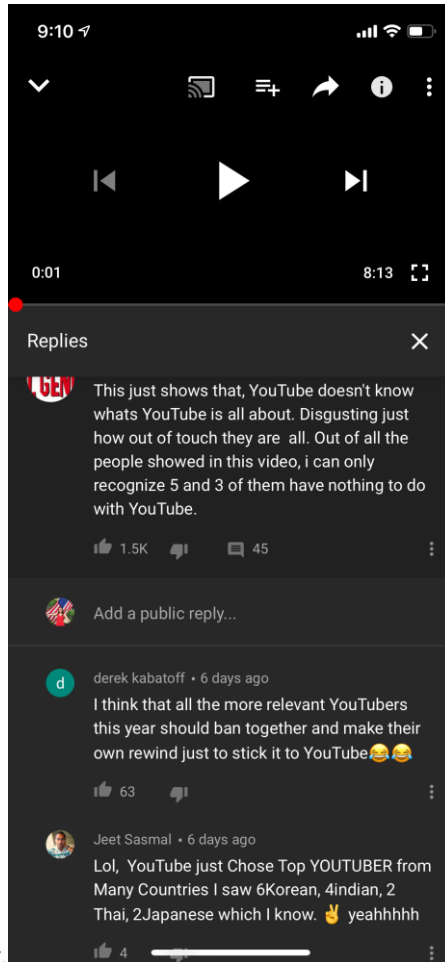
1 Like

Tweet your reply

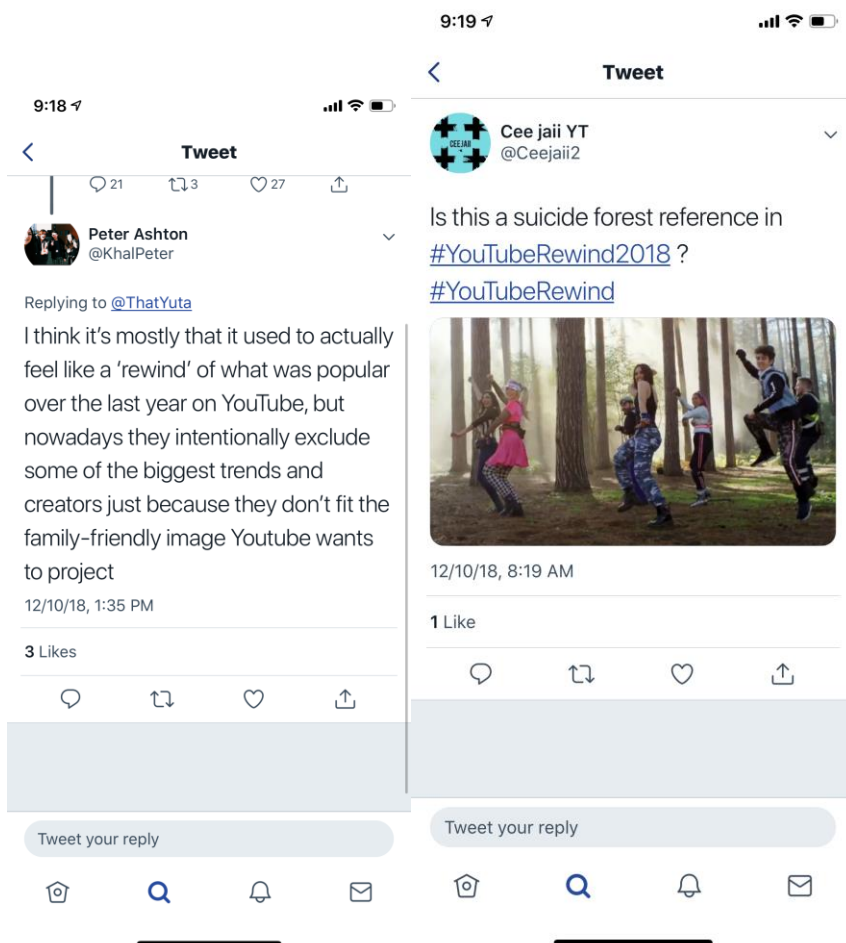
   

3. Class References: In this comment, the commenters talk about how YouTube doesn't seem to look down from its high position to see what the viewers want to see. They only seem to look at who the most popular YouTubers are (even though not all are featured) and the most popular

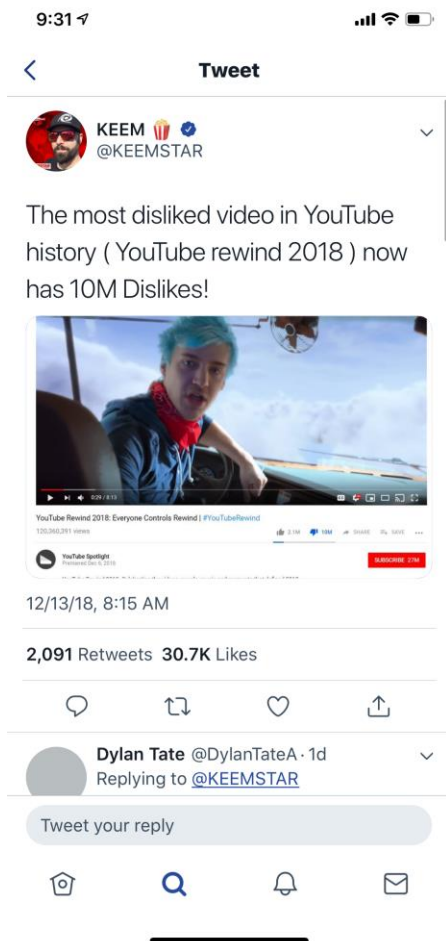


videos of the year.

4. Mythological Reference: The mythological reference in the comments I chose above are about ideas that people think about, or ideas that they choose as the reason for the video being bad. The first one is talking about why they think the video isn't good and they say. The biggest thing that they said was that YouTube didn't include certain YouTubers or videos because they didn't fit the "family friendly" picture they wanted. This connects to the huge demonetization scandal that the platform went through during 2018. The second one is talking about how they think YouTube snuck in a mention of the very controversial suicide forest video that Logan Paul uploaded this year. This is very bad and inappropriate of the company because the video was very inappropriate and is against YouTube's guidelines. This shows the mythological aspect because the commenter does not know for certain that this is what they did.



- 5. Culture Part 2 Reference (I hope this is allowed): This last comment might be the most commented thing about YouTube Rewind 2018. This is the fact that this video is now the most disliked video on YouTube ever. This is a huge cultural change for YouTube and something that they had to address. This obviously showed that people had a major problem with the video. This has also never happened to an actual YouTube that was posted by the YouTube account before.



Cassidy Arndt-Kelber
Troll Extra Credit
14 December 2018

Sicko Mode- Travis Scott and Drake
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ONRf7h3Mdk>

Recently Kanye West tweeted a lot of tweets at Drake for “sneak dissing” him in a song with Travis Scott. Travis and Kanye both have children with Kardashian/Jenner’s making them family. There is a lot of drama surrounding Drake and Kanye and it seems to be getting them all more attention. Kanye has been going on rants of his frustration including wearing a Make America Great Again hat and taking over the end of Saturday Night Live. The Sicko Mode music video had about 122,000,000 views last week and now is at about 128,000,000.

People commented on culture, technology, and creativity. There aren’t very many negative comments. There are comments referring to class, social and economic status. Both Travis Scott and Drake have a high net worth and large following. People comment on the fact that Travis is really rich and probably got even more rich from this song. Someone else says 3 different songs would’ve made more money because the song switches and sounds like 3 songs in one. The “gimme the loot” line in the song is apparently a Biggie Smalls reference. Not sure who that is but people commented that.

There is a large group of people on the internet who follow celebrities very closely on social media. I was even on Kanye’s twitter last night refreshing to see the most recent tweets from Kanye. Comments were made regarding the conspiracy that Drake killed rapper XXXtention and the part of the song people believe alludes to that. Someone commented that “Travis Rocky and ASAP Scott look very similar” about rappers ASAP Rocky and Travis Scott

because they are both African American men with similar hairstyle and body type. They also comment about Travis' "baby mama" Kylie Jenner. Some people say the only people who listen to his music are her fans. The song talks about Kylie Jenner's Forbes cover at the very end of the song. There is a line in the song referring to taking Xanax and passing out for 13 hours on a plane. People were commenting that realistically half a Xanax wouldn't last that long. These people are speaking on experience of being a part of the drug abusing culture that would know that to be false.

Mythological culturally specific narratives support and validate drug culture through the comments in this video. A lot of people allude to the use of drugs in creating the video or the look of the video. What kind of drugs do I need for things to look like this? Or What kind of drugs was the video editor on. Overall people say they enjoy the song and it makes them feel good. There are comments sharing what to expect when listening to this song and the effects it has had on them. The feelings and emotions that the music is making them feel.

There were many comments about aesthetic, style, and creativity. People are making fun of the fact that there are a lot of special effects in the video. The joke is that when asked what effects or how do you want it to look he says yes or I agree. They went
People are also saying it looks like what'd look like if you were tripping on LSD. The video does have a lot going on but it is really aesthetically pleasing. That's why people are saying it's like you're on drugs. Overall, this video is a good example of the type of content that is being most frequently consumed. We are a part of this culture of the digital age and it is important to be able to understand how these conflicts and these videos affect us.



Kaidoz ✓ 1 month ago

Director: What effects do you want?

Travis: Yes.



67K





Kadz ✓ 1 month ago

Editor: So how do you want it to look?

Travis: I agree



7.5K



REPLY



OFFICIAL CHIEF 1 day ago

Director: how many times do you want the beat to change?

Travis: YES



1



REPLY



Xb Zonalcrasher16 1 day ago

Net worth rises by 10000%



4



REPLY



1000 Subs Without Video's challenge 1 month ago (edited)

3 different songs that would've had millions of views and money wise.



943



REPLY



Depression Talks With Immanuel 1 month ago

The creativity behind this is insane



3.8K



REPLY



Prana 1 day ago

Travis Rocky and Asap Scott look very similar. 🤔



1



REPLY



Allister Crowley 1 day ago

I'm sorry but I really don't get this fad lmao

I don't mind Kylie and Travis and Drake as people, I just don't get this music honestly



REPLY



Lora Davis 1 day ago (edited)

Dude looks like **xxxtentacion** being hit by astroid @4:24 🙄🙄



REPLY



BoyBabyWipe baby 22 hours ago

Oh meh god did u hear drake at 4:24 he says out like a light r.i.p xxx <3



REPLY



Lillian Bass 18 hours ago

looking for the kanye diss



341



REPLY



alexcis04 5 hours ago

“Checks over stripes” “Lost my respect” “You not a threat”

Checks over stripes clearly means nike over adidas. And the rest dosent need an explanation



1



REPLY





The MeenoBuffallo Charles 22 hours ago

This song makes me want my toilet to shit on me.



10



REPLY



BrothaNate ✓ 1 month ago

beat switched faster than my friends switching on me



4.1K



REPLY



Sukhwinder Momi 1 day ago

I showed this to a sick kid

And he's a sicko now
Show less



3



REPLY



5000 Subscribers without Videos 1 hour ago

This song makes me want to park my garage in the car



REPLY



5000 Subscribers without Videos 1 day ago

This song makes me wanna predict the past!



REPLY



Paradox Tommy 1 month ago

This song makes me want to ride a bike like its a scooter.



3.6K



REPLY



f0rumrr 2 days ago

I dont know what it is but this song makes me feel so good.



13



REPLY



Dutch van der linde 20 hours ago

Biggie reference - give me the loot



1



REPLY



babybone601 1 day ago (edited)

Half a xan will not last the duration of 13 hours on a flight



REPLY



Sarah B 16 hours ago

Which drugs do I need to take for my world to look like this??



REPLY



Mook 1 day ago

This is literally what an acid trip look like



8



REPLY